



GOV. PRINCE ON SILVER.

An Interesting Speech on the Financial Question.

Gov. Prince Opens the Discussion on Silver at the Transmississippi Congress.

At the Transmississippi congress, last week, at St. Louis, L. Bradford Prince spoke for an hour and a half on the silver question. The speech is too long to be reproduced in these columns, but the following is the substance of it:

"The subject of a single or a double standard for money value—of monometallism or bimetalism—is attracting more attention the world over today than any other. It affects every human being living in civilized countries, because it necessarily controls all values—of land, of products, of industry and of labor on the one hand; of money, and hence of capital, interest and fixed incomes, on the other.

"The chief difficulty in its discussion in the United States has been that it has taken a sectional turn, and that the people of the two sections so misunderstand each other on the subject that any fair discussion is almost impossible. That the west, which is the producer of the great staples, with its wealth in the form of commodities, and owing large debts payable in dollars, should desire the money basis to retain the double standard existing through all history; and that English and German bankers, the great creditors of the world, receiving their interest in money, should desire a contracted financial basis, is perfectly natural. It was to be expected that those of our people in the east who are under foreign control, and others of the creditor class selfishly interested in the increase in the value of money, would unite with the foreign bankers in their single standard method of contraction; but the misfortune is that the great body of Americans east of the Mississippi, really patriotic at heart and anxious for national prosperity, should have given so little attention to the subject as to imagine their interests also to be different from those of their western brethren. Hence has arisen the misunderstanding to which I have referred."

Governor Prince then alluded to St. Louis as being a good place for a fair discussion of the money question, for it was the central city of the country, midway between the east and west, and here was a favorable place to do something toward a reconciliation of sectional views, or, at least, a partial clearing away of prejudices, on account of an almost equal connection with each section.

To show that he understood the sentiment both in the east and the west, Governor Prince remarked that he had served seven years in the New York legislature; was twice honored by votes of thanks of the New York chamber of commerce, and was still holding an honorary membership in the New

York board of trade; had served as chief justice and as governor of a western territory, and was connected with various western bodies, commercial, scientific and literary, including the past presidency of the Transmississippi congress.

Governor Prince then pointed out how the western people look upon those of the east as their enemies, and that the sole idea of eastern capitalists was thought to be a wicked desire to ruin their poorer brethren of the west. On the other hand, it was not unusual to hear eastern men speak of those of the west as "inflationists," as "cheap money men," as absolutely dishonest and as "wanting to get a dollar for 50 cents." But all this was reciprocal slander. As a rule, men of both sections were honest in their money ideas. The western man, as a rule, was a bimetalist, because he hears the subject constantly discussed and has given it careful study. The eastern man was a monometalist, as a rule, because he has simply been so situated that he has given no attention to the financial questions involved in demonetization, but has seen nothing but gold views in the journals he reads and takes it for granted that they are correct. But the eastern monometalist was not the depraved creature he is thought to be. The governor declared that the generally intelligent eastern community was ignorant of the questions involved in demonetization, but, as a rule, the western community was enlightened on the subject.

THE EDUCATIONAL IDEA.

"What we should lay special stress upon, then," said the governor, "is the educational idea. We can never expect justice to the producer and a restoration of national prosperity until we have the aid of our eastern brethren in undoing the pernicious legislation of 1873 and giving us again the bimetalism which is the only safeguard of stability in property values and protector of the rights of labor; and we cannot have that cooperation until they have become informed as to the question at issue so as to act intelligently.

"In the first place let us remind our eastern friends that bimetalists are not asking for anything new, or unusual, or untried. On the contrary, the joint use of gold and silver as measures of value and mediums of exchange—in other words, as money—has been the universal custom of the world since the birth of civilization. Coming down to our times, the free and unlimited coinage of these two metals was the heritage of the American people, as it was enacted in England in 1666, in the reign of Charles II. and again under George III. in 1768 and continued until long after the revolution.

"When the constitution was framed it specially mentioned gold and silver equally as the only proper measures of value, prohibiting the states from making anything but them a tender in payment of debts."

The speaker traced the history of our money on down to the demonetization act of 1873, which, he declared, was passed by stealth, absolutely without the knowledge of the American people and, as appears, without the knowledge of any member of congress with the possible exception of three. The

title of the act gave no suggestion of its object. It was understood by all that the bill which passed was simply a revision of the mint laws, and very little attention was given to it. When it was discovered some time afterward that by the omission of the standard silver dollar from the act silver had been demonetized, the country was amazed. Now all that bimetalists contend for is that this act, thus secretly and fraudulently passed without knowledge by legislators of the people and which no one will even yet defend, should be repealed."

Continuing, Governor Prince said:

"England is a creditor nation to the extent of about ten billion dollars. She holds the securities of other bonds to that extent and draws from them each year \$500,000,000 in interest. The best computation shows that we alone are paying her \$200,000,000 a year in interest—more than half a million a day! Every increase in the value of a dollar, therefore, enormously enlarges her income. By demonetizing one of the two money metals, the remaining money in the world—reduced one-half in volume—would rapidly increase in purchasing power. This was perfectly easy to foresee. Her money lenders wished contraction in order to increase the value of their investments, principal and interest. The demonetization of one of the two precious metals was the easiest way to accomplish this. They did not care which metal it was—the result would be the same. For some years they formed the plan to demonetize gold, and Chevalier and others earnestly advocated that course. But that did not succeed and then they attacked silver. Here they achieved success by the secret passage of the act of 1873 in the United States. Bimetalists simply ask that this act be repealed, and that the law of free coinage be restored as it had always been before. Monometallists resist this. That is the whole issue.

"I submit that it is the monometallists who are insisting on a change from the universal custom and asking it through a perpetuation of an acknowledged fraud. They should be on the defensive, for the burden of proof of good results is on them."

The speaker said that it was a misrepresentation to say that the bimetalists of the west were only "a lot of silver miners who want to get a dollar for 50 cents worth of silver." Of course, the silver mining district was much affected, but the silver miners were so small in number as compared to the vast body of the people affected by the evils of contraction that they need scarcely be considered as a factor. If there was not an ounce of silver produced in the United States the question of bimetalism would be unchanged.

SILVER AND WHEAT.

"The total annual product of silver has never reached 60,000,000 ounces," said the speaker. "In 1892 it was 55,000,000; last year it was considerably less; while the product of wheat averages about 500,000,000 bushels. The average price of wheat in 1873 was \$1.20, while today it is selling at your exchange at 50 cents, after paying freight to St. Louis. The loss to the producer of silver through demonetization was never in any year over \$22,-

Grant County